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ABSTRACT

In order to survive projected enrollment decreases and to better serve nontraditional students, community colleges must develop marketing plans that make effective use of five community resources: local school system personnel, business and industry, civic and social service agencies, college personnel, and the local media. In approaching these groups, the college marketing team should: (1) provide concurrent enrollment programs for high school seniors, contact new high school graduates, and inform public school administrators and counselors of college services; (2) maintain communications with area businesses by including executives on advisory committees, purchasing goods and materials from local businesses, responding to industrial training needs, and informing employees of college programs; (3) secure the support of service agencies that help specific constituencies, such as senior citizens, the handicapped, or veterans; (4) assure that the expertise of college personnel is shared with the public at large; and (5) utilize both Spanish and English language media in publicizing campus events. The success of these marketing activities, which should be evaluated on a regular basis, will depend on effective communication and upon the student support services provided by the college. The report delineates step-by-step approaches for securing the support of each of the five groups discussed. (JP)

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MARKETING MODEL FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by

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Marketing Model for Community College

Introduction

In the past 25 years enrollment in institutions of higher education has climbed to record levels; however, in the late seventies double digit enrollments diminished to the more typical 2 to 4 percent. Furthermore, most projections for the next 10 to 20 years forecast enrollment declines (Bowen, Dresch, Freeman, Froomkin's, Carnegie Council, National Center for Educational Statistics), Table 1. The forecast can be attributed to the lack of population growth and the decreasing demand for college graduates. Thus it is imperative that institutions of higher education, especially community colleges, place a greater emphasis on their marketing strategies and approaches. This is even more important to colleges along the border that deal with non-traditional student populations, since these populations have historically been underrepresented in institutions of higher learning.

The community college has emerged to play a very viable role in providing students with opportunities to increase their technical skills and enhance their educational development. National surveys indicate that almost twice as many high school graduates were entering two-year colleges in 1972 (14.4 percent) as in 1961 (7.6 percent). During the same period the proportion of students entering four-year colleges immediately after high school decreased from 33 to 29 percent (Peng, 1977). Furthermore, the open admissions concept of community colleges and the increased number of financial aid programs have brought about an increasing participation by non-traditional student clientele,

i.e., adults, women, and other minorities. The aforementioned student clientele are reflected in the increasing number of women, adults, and other minorities (Mexican Americans) attending institutions along the Texas-Mexico border. Even though accessibility has increased the enrollment of minorities, they are still underrepresented since the retention and completion rates for minorities are lower in the secondary schools as well as in the institutions of higher learning (Clivas, 1979). Thus, in spite of all the inroads that have been made in making higher education accessible, viable marketing and retention programs that will increase the participation and retention of non-traditional students are still a fundamental need.

Community colleges, that are providing services to non-traditional student populations need to implement continuous and viable marketing activities that deal with the student on a more direct and personal basis. In order to do this, the market plan should include interaction with the different human and social resources in the community. The following entities should be analyzed to determine the resources available in the community.

1. School system, board members, superintendents, principals, and counselors.
2. Top management from business and industry involvement in some of the long-range planning committees of the institution.
3. Community organizations, i.e., churches, social service agencies, adult education centers, etc.
4. College personnel involved in community activities as resource persons for the marketing plan.
5. Media services available in the community, i.e., radio, television, newspapers, and pamphlets in English and Spanish, as means of information dissemination.

The analysis of the aforementioned resources will provide the marketing team with an overview of the resources available to the institution in the service area. In order to implement a marketing plan with the different entities mentioned above, the institution has to plan the different approaches that are going to be used in interacting with the different entities in the community.

Public School System

The following steps are to be used by the marketing team (consisting of counselors) in dealing with the public school system.

A. Make a formal presentation to the superintendent or school board concerning the services that the institution has available for high school students.

B. After formal authorization from the superintendent is received, arrange a meeting with the high school principal, and counseling department to explain the institution's outreach services. Make sure you explain that the primary role is to serve as a resource person to them and the students.

C. Provide them with copies of different types of college information that you will make available to them, such as financial aid forms, admissions applications, matchbook transfer data degree plans, and terminal degree programs.

D. Designate a date for weekly or biweekly visits; also, make yourself available on request. Plan meetings with groups of students or individual students as requested by high school counselors. Organize meetings with parents from that specific high school; use this as a forum to present the different programs of the college and to disseminate information.

E. Invite public school counselors to visit your campus so that they can become better acquainted with facilities and programs available at the institution. Texas Southmost College sponsors inservice training sessions for area counselors.

F. At end of the school year send every high school graduate a congratulatory letter from the institution and make a make a follow-up telephone call.

G. Implement a concurrent enrollment program to enable talented high school seniors to earn college credit. This serves as an incentive to students and a feeder to the institution.

Each member of the institution's marketing team (counselors) has to be provided with a calendar that specifically delineates the timetable for the activities memtioned above. One member of the counseling department is assigned for every 350 senior students in the school system. This provides the counselor with the opportunity to make personal contact with at least 70% of the senior class during the school year. It is very important that personnal involved in this outreach activity be resourceful, active in the community, genuinely interested in helping people enroll in higher education, and highly motivated.

Business and Industry

Another potential source of students exists through business and industry. Needless to say, those resources provide job opportunities for the graduates of the institution; thus, it is imperative that channels of communication with business and industry be maintained continuously. The following steps are recommended for nurturing a working relationship with the business and industrial community.

A. Top management from business and industry should serve in the institution's advisory committees in order to have input for the planning of programs.

B. In purchasing goods and materials, the institution should try to do business with the local business establishment whenever economically feasible and thus develop positive relationships.

C. Members of the institution should meet with business and industry representatives to determine if specific services or training might be provided by the institution to upgrade the skills of the employees.

D. The institution should disseminate course schedules, admissions forms, and financial aid applications to the different businesses and industries on a semester basis to assure that employees have a convenient opportunity to enroll at the institution.

E. Personnel from business and industry that have expertise in certain areas should be invited as guest speakers at the institution.

F. The institution's job placement office should meet with the personnel managers of the different companies on a continuous basis throughout the year. This activity will provide the institution with a picture of the employment market along with feedback on graduates placed on the job.

Social Service Organizations

The marketing team at the institution has to establish interlinkages with the different social service organizations throughout the service areas. Organizations in the community usually help specific constituenices, such as, senior citizens, the handicapped, battered women, veterans, migrants, and other social groups. Since these organizations are usually involved in promoting social casues and fund-raising, it is imperative to identify and communicate with the key leaders. In order for the marketing team to establish the communication linkages with social service organizations, the following activities are recommended:

A. Make formal presentations to the membership of the social service organizations concerning the different programs and services available at the institution.

B. Arrange on-site visitations for these groups so that they can become better acquainted with the campus and the new programs.

C. Disseminate leaflets and brochures at the different places where these organizations congregate or meet.

D. Promote the involvement of college staff and faculty in the community organizations.

E. Request scholarship donations from social service organizations interested in a particular area of study. For example, the Jaycees or the Rotary could sponsor a trip to Washington for students to study the Presidency.

F. Organize a yearly conference on campus for all of these community organizations to discuss and plan activities that can be of mutal interest to the different organizations and the institution.

College Personnel

Community involvement by college personnel can be very beneficial to the institution. In addition to the satisfied consumer, the greatest promoter of an institution can be its personnel themselves. An institution has a vast amount of knowledge and expertise that is usually not shared outstide the classroom or the institution; therefore, it is imperative for the institution to formulate ways in which the human resources available at the institution can be shared with the community. The following activities are recommended as ways the institution can internally promote greater community involvement by college personnel:

A. Develop a handbook listing the names of faculty and professional staff and their areas of expertise. The handbook can be disseminated throughout the community.

B. Establish a community-education council to discuss, formulate and implement plans or activities to improve the quality of life.

C. Professional staff and faculty can organize on-campus seminars in their areas of expertise and invite the community at large to attend.

D. Provide incentives for faculty and professional staff involvement in the community.

Media

The media, an absolute necessity in contemporary life, can be very instrumental in conveying information to the public. The bilingual nature of communities in the Southwest is an additional variable that has to be acknowledged if institutions are going to reach out to the Spanish-speaking community. In addition to word of mouth, most, Spanish-speaking communities along the border have three basic formal modes of communication, i.e., Spanish newspapers, radio stations, and television station programming. Institutions have to use the channels of communication that are used by the community in order to reach out effectively to the community, especially the Mexican American community. The following are some recommend activities for using the media to appeal to the public:

A. Design a calendar of events delineating campus specific activities and disseminate it to the media on a monthly basis.

B. Advertise, in both Spanish and English newspapers, the services available at the institution, such as schedules, the Counseling Center, financial aid, etc.

C. Members of the marketing team should seek opportunities to participate in radio and television programs as a means of advertising the services available at the institution.

D. Make brochrues, leaflets and catalogs available in Spanish to the public.

E. Invite the media to the different professional seminars and activities conducted on campus.

F. Prepare a videotape narrative of the institution in English and Spanish to use in presentations to the community groups.

G. Invite the media to present a career workshop to the journalism students at the institution.

Conclusion

Needless to say, the key element of the marketing approaches mentioned above is the effective communication that has to exist within the institution before it can be carried out to the different segments of the community. Discussing the issues with members of the marketing team is absolutely necessary if you are going to be effective in dealing with the public sector. While effective communication might be one of the most nebulous things we as administrators face, it is also one of the most difficult and costly effects to achieve. But it is so necessary that it must be achieved at any cost. Upon effective communication hinges practically every facet of the administrator's job from the development of human resources the actual completion of the job which he or she is assigned.

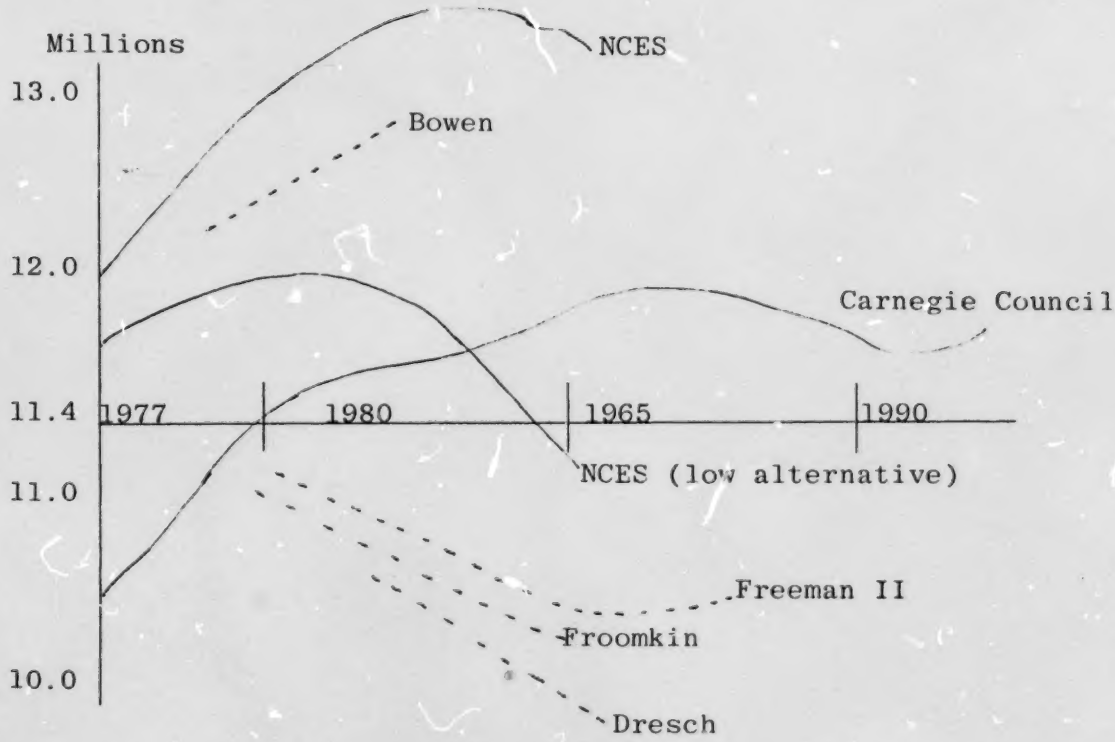
Marketing an institution is a people process that requires communication. Communication, however, is sometimes thought of only in terms of formally spoken or written words. In essence, we are inclined or tempted to look at communication as solely a language process. However, when direct interacting with people is brought into the definition communication becomes more of a people process than a language process. In essence, communication is a people process that can be enhanced by improving the relationships that exist among individuals, thus promoting a greater sense of understanding throughout the institution and the community.

Even though it is difficult to forecast the many factors that can alter enrollment projections, the most feasible way for community colleges to continue their growth is to implement viable

marketing programs that adhere to the needs of their student constituency. Although enrollment uncertainties are bound to play a role, it is imperative that institutions implement marketing systems on a continuous, planned, and predictable basis, in order to make the institutions more accessible to their changing student populations.

Once the institution has created its position in the community market, it has to evaluate continuously its internal mechanisms in order to maintain, change or delete specific marketing activities. The product of successful marketing activities is to have the proper internal supportive services that will enhance the probabilities or retaining non-traditional students attending community colleges. Perhaps we can conclude by saying that marketing is dependent not only on the image of what your institution can do, but ultimately on the quality of your product.

TABLE I



Projections and Possibilities for Total Enrollment
in Postsecondary Education to 1990
(Relative to Actual 1977 Total Enrollment of 11.4 Million)

Note: The broken lines for Bowen's, Freeman's, Dresch's, and Froomkin's second scenarios are not based on actual figures but instead are approximate illustrations of their views.

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